agnews

Crops
Forestry
Entomology
Horticulture
Awards
Community Development
Fine Arts
Agriculture
Livestock
Research
4-H Youth
Events
Family and Consumer Sciences

Search News

Archive

RSS 2.0 ATOM

Growing Kentucky
Radio News

Special features

Ag Information Center
Ag Magazine
Publications
Office of Diversity
Ag Weather
Ag Faculty Council
Staff Links
College Store

College Highlights

Students
Alumni and Giving
Extension
Research
Administration
Departments/Units
Directory

UK research serves up juicy boost to grape and wine industry

By Aimee Nielson

LEXINGTON, Ky., (Jun 6, 2008) - Kentucky has been experiencing somewhat of a grape revival over the past decade. Vineyard acreage has exploded to roughly 800 acres in the state with more vineyards springing up all the time. Most producers are new to the industry and depend on the research and expertise of University of Kentucky College of Agriculture specialists to get their vines growing and thriving and then decide what to do with the harvest.

Nearly three years ago, Kaan Kurtural and Tom Cottrell arrived at UK to be the institution's first viticulturist and enologist respectively. Since then, they and their graduate students/research assistants have delved into a whirlwind of projects to help the Kentucky grape and wine industry gain ground and earn respect for its practices and products.

With a little more than three acres of grapes planted at UK's Horticulture Research Farm in south Lexington, researchers have a lot of irons in the fire focusing on multiple areas of study.

"Well, the focus of the research is quite broad. We have about 16 different projects," Kurtural said, referring to the grape acreage. "Our main focus areas are helping producers decide where to plant vineyards and why. They want to know what kind of cultivars to plant and how to crop those cultivars sustainably so they can produce a marketable crop. The other thing we are looking at is reducing the pesticide input into the vineyards and reducing the carbon footprint of some of these vineyards."

Kurtural and his team played a leading role in creating a multi-state mapping project, using Global Positioning System technology to help producers select potential vineyard locations on their land. Kurtural simply inputs latitude and longitude information into the program and the computer generates a map of the location and areas in that location best suited for grape production.

UK graduate student and full-time research assistant Brandon O'Daniel spends a lot of time in the field managing UK's vineyard. He's experimenting with different grape varieties, cropping and pest management systems. O'Daniel believes Kentucky's grape and wine industry can have a solid future with proper education and management tools.

"It's takes a lot of up-front investment, but as far as actually being an alternative for the farmer, I do think it has a lot of promise," he said. "I think farmers are going to have to change their perspective on how they actually do agriculture and how they react with the public, but I think it has a lot of promise and a lot of potential here in the state."

Patsy Wilson is also a graduate student and full-time research assistant with grape and wine industry aspirations after graduation. She spent a lot of time in the vineyard studying different grape varieties but focused on Vidal Blanc as a potential, cold-hardy variety for Kentucky producers. She spends a lot of time now in the lab researching Vidal Blanc and its potential as a premier wine grape for the state.

"I looked at different pruning severity levels as well as cluster thinning levels and saw how that affects the vine, including things like micro-climate and cold hardiness," she said. "Then I took the grapes from that project, and I made wine with them to see how those pruning and cluster thinning treatments affect the wine. We take it as far as running the wine samples through different kinds of lab equipment, and then we actually run it through a trained tasting panel."

Research in the vineyard often involves other disciplines such as entomology. The Japanese beetle is an enemy of grapevines. UK entomology graduate student and research assistant Derrick Hammons is studying environmentally responsible ways to combat the beetle in the vineyard.

"We are looking at the effects of defoliation on vine growth development, and this year we will be looking at crop yield. The idea is to convince growers that even though they see Japanese beetles, they don't have to spray as much as they think they do," he emphasized. "They can cut back their sprays and their use of sprays. That's going to be more and more important, especially as fuel costs increase, and pesticide safety is always a concern."

All in all, research in the vineyard and the lab is helping Kentucky grape producers increase the quantity and quality of their businesses. Producers continually are looking to UK to provide answers to tough questions, and thanks to a team of dedicated scientists and students UK is responding with solid, science-based solutions.

Contact: *Kaan Kurtural, 859-257-1332*

More on the Topics of: **Crops** **Research** **Horticulture** **Entomology** **Agriculture**

More News

Field day to focus on Agriculture in a New Bioeconomy

LEXINGTON, Ky., (Jun 2, 2008)

Each year, the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture offers many opportunities for Kentuckians to come onto its research farms and learn about current research. On June 12, the college will offer a peek into equine, forage and crop research efforts during a field day at UK's Spindletop Research Farm in Lexington. Registration and exhibits begin at 2 p.m.

Field clinics...
read more

Rain slows corn planting, hay production across state

LEXINGTON, Ky., (May 27, 2008)

Many corn and hay producers have faced delays this spring due to extremely wet conditions. However as summer nears, the rain is expected to slow and allow farmers time to finish their spring tasks.

More News

Double crop farmers face good news, bad news scenario

PRINCETON, Ky., (Jun 6, 2008)

Wheat and soybean prices are at record high levels this year. On the other hand, so are energy prices. Double crop farmers must consider both those facts...
read more

Johnson County program teaches youths about water

VAN LEAR, Ky., (Jun 6, 2008)

Meade Memorial Elementary School 3rd and 4th graders received firsthand knowledge about water and water quality issues in their communities as they "transformed"...
read more

Rising food prices affecting consumer confidence

LEXINGTON, Ky., (Jun 6, 2008)

Many people are talking about it. Most people have noticed it. It can't be ignored any longer. The family food budget doesn't stretch as far as it did...
read more

4-H'ers spice up their gardens

LEXINGTON, Ky., (Jun 6, 2008)

Gardening projects and activities have been part of 4-H for a long time, but University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension agents in Madison and Christian...
read more

4-H GrowBiz explores the business of basil

, (Jun 3, 2008)

LEXINGTON, Ky., (May 28, 2008) – 4-H'ers are getting hands-on experience in entrepreneurship and gardening through 4-H GrowBiz, a program offered at the...
read more

Farm bill '08 enacted into law, with one exception

, (Jun 3, 2008)

LEXINGTON, Ky., (May 28, 2008) – After much debate, a presidential veto, a printing snafu and a Congressional override, 14 of the 15 titles of the Food...
read more

UK Wins $10 Million NIH Superfund Grant

, (Jun 3, 2008)

LEXINGTON, Ky. (May 27, 2008) – The University of Kentucky has received a grant of more than $10 million for a multi-pronged effort to study the...
read more

Most of the state is extremely moist. As of May 19, the state is 4.04 inches above normal rainfall totals. Keys Arnold, staff meteorologist in the University of Kentucky College of...
read more

Emerald ash borer traps to be placed in northern Kentucky

LEXINGTON, Ky., (May 27, 2008)

Bright purple 1-foot-by-2-feet triangular objects resembling box kites will be used to detect adult emerald ash borers in northern Kentucky starting in mid- to late-May. These traps will be baited with a manuka oil beetle attractant and glue to lure and capture emerald ash borers.

"These traps were designed to catch EAB (emerald ash borer) beetles that are active in the areas;...
read more